

CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION MEETING
APPROVED Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2005
Boise, ID

A regular meeting of the Idaho Charter School Commission was held on March 3, 2005 at the Jordan Ballroom at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. Chairman Hammond presided. The following members were present:

Marianne Donnelly
Kirk Miller
Paul Powell

Jim Hammond
Esther Van Wart

Ann Souza

Commissioner Goesling was absent and excused.

The open meeting convened at 8:00 a.m.

1. Commission Work

a) Agenda Approval

Chairman Hammond suggested amending the agenda to move Rolling Hills directly after Commission Work.

M/S (Powell/Souza): To approve Agenda as amended. *The motion carried unanimously.*

b) Rolling Calendar

M/S (Miller/Donnelly): To approve the next meeting dates as April 14, May 12, June 9, 2005 and Boise State University as the location for the next regularly scheduled Commission meetings. *The motion carried unanimously.*

c) Minutes Approval

M/S (Powell/Miller): To approve the Minutes from January 20 and February 2 as submitted. *The motion carried unanimously.*

2. Public Charter School Commission Rules

The Commission adopted an initial set of Rules Governing the Public Charter School Commission at their July meeting. Since that time, the Commission has found that further clarification and information is needed in the rules.

Karen Echeverria, Commission Staff, explained to the Commissioners that the proposed rules clarify the petition submission process, information needed by the Commission for compliance monitoring and oversight, how public hearings before the Commission will be conducted, and the format of all petitions that are submitted to the Commission.

Commissioners Souza and Miller asked Staff if there is or will be an “opt-out” exception for the rule that requires petitioners to attend a charter school workshop hosted by the State Department of Education. It was determined that it is an issue to take up with the State Board of Education.

Commissioner Miller suggested that they add a requirement to receive resumes of any new Board Members.

Chairman Hammond suggested that the requirement to “reside in school district” be waived and that the Commission itself would ensure that the testimony provided to the Commission is pertinent to individual petitions. Commissioners also suggested that the 48-hour notice of intent to speak needed to be amended to say “the day of the meeting.”

M/S (Donnelly/Van Wart): A motion to approve, as temporary and proposed, the Rules Governing the Public Charter School Commission, IDAPA 08.03.01, as amended. *Motion passed unanimously.*

3. Rolling Hills Public Charter School – Charter Amendment

The Idaho Charter School Commission authorized Rolling Hills Public Charter School on September 17, 2004. The initial petition submitted by Rolling Hills and approved by the Commission included a letter of intent to lease ground on State Street between Duncan Street and Bogart Street. Rolling Hills is requesting that they be allowed to amend their Charter to reflect the current property.

Christine Reynolds from Rolling Hills Public Charter School explained the amended attendance zone.

Commissioner Miller asked about Rolling Hills progress. Ms. Reynolds noted that they had updated their lottery procedure policy. Ms. Reynolds also reported on the new hire of their administrator and their advertising plans. She also noted they were seeking financing to build the physical structure.

Commissioner Miller complimented representatives from Rolling Hills on their advertising plan, and the visibility it is receiving.

4. Academy at Roosevelt Center

Petitioners filed a petition with the Idaho Charter School Commission January 2005 after referral from the Pocatello Chubbuck School District. The Board of directors of the proposed charter school submitted a petition to their local school district and, after a public hearing the school district Board of Trustees referred the petitioners to the Commission. The Founding Board Members addressed the Commission. These members included: Dr. James Brainard, Paul Hathaway, Rod Eggleston, Annie Kunz-Dixon, Rich Kirkham, Cathy McMurtrey, Dr. Karen Johnston, and Jill Kirkham.

Ms. Echeverria explained to the Commission the Staff Memo completed on ARC's petition.

Mr. Brainard took the Commission through the changes that had been made based on the staff review of their petition.

Chairman Hammond asked for clarification regarding the governance of the school. Paul Hathaway clarified that the intention is that the founding board will be the initial board of trustees. Once the Charter is granted, there will be three more elected positions.

Commissioner Souza asked for the condition of the facility when it was purchased from the district. Mr. Kirkham outlined the improvements that were made, and stated the goal of making the improvements was to create a good facility for general use. The building is expected to pass state inspection.

Chairman Hammond had questions with the volunteer transportation systems. Commissioner Van Wart outlined the steps that Pocatello Community Charter School followed, which included background checks, personal comprehensive insurance, and the school itself purchased liability insurance. Commissioner Miller added that ANSER Charter School had a communication provision as well.

Commissioner Miller asked for clarification regarding what grades will be offered. The petitioners responded that they were asking the Commission to be chartered as a K-12 school, with services for K-8 and plan to expand to K-12.

Commissioner Van Wart asked about notification for the public for the Board meetings, since there was no provision listed in the petition. The petitioners noted the oversight and stated their goal was transparency and they plan to comply with all open meeting laws.

Commissioner Powell asked if they anticipate applying for the State Charter grant, since it wasn't listed in the budget. Mr. Eggleston noted that they were trying to be conservative and not count on money not received. Commissioner Powell continued and asked if their 3-year budget accounted for the escalation of costs and start up costs. Mr. Kirkham answered that the start up costs seemed low because they weren't starting with four bare walls – they had procured a lot of classroom materials.

Chairman Hammond asked about the Academy at Roosevelt Center's mission statement and objectives and how they plan on measuring their student standards, including standards such as "personal responsibility, positive attitudes and perceptions, etc." Annie Kunz-Dixon replied that as part of the Harbor School method students, teachers, and parents complete evaluations.

Commissioner Van Wart noted that the fiscal years identified in the petition need to be corrected from August 1st to July 1st. She also asked how the petitioners felt about their working relationship with the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District. Mr. Brainard answered that the petitioners have good working relationships with the educational community in the area, separate from the District.

Commissioner Souza asked petitioners to cite where the research is regarding K12, Inc. and its effectiveness. A representative from K12, Inc. addressed the Commission and noted that the research is new and still evolving. The representatives from ARC and K12, Inc. will give specific 3rd party research on the curriculum/methods to Commission staff.

Chairman Hammond asked if the intention was to have a virtual school or a "brick and mortar" school. The petitioners noted that the virtual component was an additional resource for children who may be out ill or traveling. Commissioner Miller added that by accommodating those situations, it might lead to an increase of absences. Mr. Brainard noted that the school would be aware of any abuses of the accommodation.

Chairman Hammond then opened the floor for public testimony regarding the petition from the Academy at Roosevelt Center.

Chuck Wegner, Director of Curriculum and Assessment for the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District testified regarding the petition. His testimony outlined that the opening of additional charters would be detrimental to the district's operating budget, as a result of "Average Daily Attendance" funds being redirected from district schools to the Academy at Roosevelt Center. Mr. Wegner's testimony also noted concern about the curriculum the petitioners are proposing to use.

Terry Anderson, a Pocatello/Chubbuck School Board member, also gave public comment. She outlined that the petitioners did not take steps to work with the district before submitting their petition. She also included testimony regarding the reduced funding of schools at the district.

Commissioner Powell asked about the financial impact for the district and if it was due to the out-migration/demographics and how much is due to market share. Mr. Wegner testified that the majority is due to demographics, since the only charter school choice in Pocatello is Pocatello Community Charter School.

Commissioner Van Wart commented that the issue at hand isn't the effectiveness of charter schools; it is the Academy at Roosevelt Center. She continued by asking why the district referred the petition to the Commission. Ms. Anderson answered that the petitioners did not want to work with the district. Commissioner Van Wart noted that the Commission would prefer that petitioners work with the district.

Commissioner Van Wart noted that recently there were schools that mentioned overcrowding in the Pocatello School District. Ms. Anderson noted that the classrooms aren't necessarily overcrowded; it is the common areas that are overcrowded.

Commissioner Miller asked Ms. Anderson and Mr. Wegner about the demographics and the projection of future enrollment in the Pocatello/Chubbuck School District. Mr. Wegner noted that enrollment will decrease in the next couple of years.

Commissioner Van Wart asked about some of the buildings that were closed and wanted to know if they were closed for under enrollment or for safety reasons. Mr. Wegner noted that one of the schools was for under enrollment and the other for safety reasons.

Commissioner Miller asked if the district has looked at offering magnet schools and/or focus schools. Mr. Wegner noted that they have only discussed those options with administration.

Chairman Hammond noted that he would like to know how the Commission should appropriately weigh potential financial impact to the local School District versus a potential Charter School. He directed Commission Legal Counsel and Staff to work together to find some answers and legal opinions.

M/S (Souza/Miller): A motion to hold the decision on the ARC Public Charter School until the next meeting of the Commission. *Motion passed 5-0, with Commissioner Donnelly abstaining.*

5. INSPIRE Virtual Charter School

Petitioners from INSPIRE Virtual Charter School filed a petition with the Idaho Charter School Commission on February 1, 2005. Because the proposed charter school is a virtual school, the board of directors of INSPIRE submitted their petition directly to the Idaho Public Charter School Commission for authorization.

Representatives from INSPIRE began their presentation to the Commission, which included their financial plan, the definition of a public virtual school, the proposed curriculum and structure of the courses to be offered.

Commissioner Donnelly asked how many students they anticipate having in their system. Petitioners noted that they anticipate approximately 500 students from across the state.

Commissioner Van Wart asked about the student teacher ratio of 1:50 and how the quality of education can be upheld with that large of a ratio? Carrie Ross answered by explaining when you factor in the division of labor that the students would receive adequate one on one attention. She further explained that each teacher handles about 10 families a day.

Commissioner Van Wart asked about what will happen if children don't get the support from home they need. Carrie Ross answered that some families will need extra assistance – there will be a spread of higher and lower demand families.

Commissioner Van Wart followed up with a question about materials and how they will be distributed. Ms. Ross noted that the materials are sent out after the student is tested and after teachers know what level of curriculum the student needs.

Commissioner Miller expressed concern about the feasibility of a child who needs face-to-face time if all of INSPIRE's teachers are all located in one central area.

Commissioner Powell asked the petitioners about the education resource center line item in the budget and the rent/lease as well, and if it was referring to a single facility. INSPIRE representatives explained that the line item for educational resource center is for the math, curriculum specialists, etc. The facilities in the budget are on the Boise State campus.

Commissioner Powell noted that there was very minimal excess revenue and wanted to know if INSPIRE had included any flexibility in expenditures. Representatives from INSPIRE noted that the possible state charter grant money isn't included in the budget.

Commissioner Miller asked them to describe the structure of their relationship with Connections Academy and who is employed with what entity. Ms. Ross from INSPIRE explained that INSPIRE will hire the administration (principals, teachers, etc.). The technology staff comes from Connections Academy.

Commissioner Donnelly asked how the program can help at-risk children because they generally won't have the at-home support of a "Learning Coach." INSPIRE representatives answered that the one-on-one support students receive actually helps at-risk students. They noted that every curriculum would not fit every student.

Chairman Hammond then opened the floor for public comment on the petition submitted from INSPIRE.

Laurieann Shoemaker, Chair of the Board of Trustees for Idaho Virtual Academy, gave public comment. Her comments suggested that Idaho public education would not benefit from another virtual school. She stated that INSPIRE Virtual Charter School does not significantly improve the current situation in Idaho.

Cindy Schiller gave public testimony. She had questions regarding how much thought and time was put into this petition. She also addressed the amount of need for another virtual school, and explained that INSPIRE is very limiting, not innovative, or unique.

Chairman Hammond asked for information regarding what parameters the Commission has to work within and if they can approve a petition that projects such a high rate of expected growth.

M/S (Powell/Souza): A motion to hold the decision on INSPIRE Public Charter School until the next meeting of the Commission. *Motion carried unanimously.*

Chairman Hammond adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

APPROVED

March 3, 2005

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